

RESEARCH REPORTS

POST-DIVORCE CHALLENGES FACED BY MEN IN THE MALDIVES: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

MASHA MOHAMED & AMINATH RIYAZ

The Maldives National University

ABSTRACT *Divorce is a transition that brings considerable emotional, physical, and economic changes to a person. While navigating this complex adjustment can be challenging and unsettling for both parties involved, these difficulties may vary for men perceived as less expressive than women. This research aims to identify the challenges men face after a divorce. The study will also explore how these challenges influence and shape how they move on in life. This research employs qualitative semi-structured one-to-one interviews and an online focus group discussion. Interview participants included divorced men from three socio-economic backgrounds who were willing to share their experiences. The online focus group comprised of divorced men discussing life after divorce in a generic context. Thematic analysis of participant responses, guided by relevant literature, focused on identifying the challenges men encounter and evaluating the impact of these challenges on their lives. The findings indicate that the degree of conflict between divorcing individuals during and after their separation significantly influences how men cope with the divorce and the intensity of post-divorce challenges. Notably, maintaining an amicable relationship with their ex-wife, particularly when children are involved, emerged as a significant topic of concern. Participants emphasised the need for psychological support throughout the divorce process and beyond. They highlighted interventions such as advice on effective co-parenting strategies and implementation of parenting plans to facilitate active father involvement in raising their children even when the child primarily resides with the mother post-divorce. These findings suggest implications for policy changes that aims to promote smoother post-divorce transitions for all parties involved.*

Keywords: *Fatherhood post-divorce, Post-divorce transition, Co-parenting, Divorce challenges, Mental health*

Introduction

The divorce rate in the Maldives is alarmingly high, with UNFPA (2004) reporting it as the highest in the world, with 10.97 divorces per one thousand people. Divorce remains a significant concern in the country as highlighted by various studies (Shanoora et al., 2020; Aboobakuru & Riyaz, 2021; Shazra & Riyaz, 2022; Nomani et al., 2023). While divorce is not stigmatised in Maldivian society, research literature highlights that the post-divorce journey consists of many practical and emotional turbulence. These challenges include changes in social networks, parenting styles, self-identity, and grieving process (Vanassche et al., 2015). When the challenges of post-divorce life are considered, research and policy intervention focus primarily on women (Leopold, 2018). Additionally, the Maldives has witnessed numerous

cases of fathers abandoning their children (MGFSS, 2019) or losing contact with their children after a divorce with no effective laws to protect the affected parties from the repercussions of absences.

The traditional culture followed in most countries often expects men to be less sensitive and less expressive, as these traits are commonly associated with strength, power, and masculinity (Rocheleau, 2021). Similarly, in the case of divorce, men are often expected to remain relatively unaffected by the upheaval (Bracke et al., 2010). For this reason, it gets difficult to access the kind of support that is required for men after a divorce. There is a shortage of research evidence that evaluates the challenges and changes after a divorce through a male-centric perspective (Stevenson et al., 2013). The relevance of such research is even higher when there are existing challenges with mental health promotion in men.

Accordingly, the objective of this paper is to identify and analyse the challenges men face after divorce as they adapt to new routines, to explore how these challenges influence and shape their process of move on, and to examine the policy-level changes needed to make post-divorce life healthier and easier during the transition.

Literature Review

The challenges men face after divorce as they adapt to a new routine involve several aspects of their lives, including their social circle, financial adjustments, mental well-being, family dynamics, and the impact on their livelihood.

Health & wellbeing

After a divorce, men are more likely to experience a disproportionate decline in family life satisfaction and increased dissatisfaction with custodial agreements (Leopold, 2018). After the first year of divorce, many fathers see a significant decline in contact with their children, often due to custodial arrangements (Catlett & McKenry, 2004). This loss of daily physical contact with their children and a major source of social support can be detrimental. Fathers who manage to maintain a close relationship with their children after divorce, tend to adjust better and move forward in a healthier manner (Joyce, 2016). According to Joyce (2016), fathers who have experienced high conflict divorces often have minimal contact and influence on their children. Even though there is no specific agreement on what defines 'high-conflict divorce', characteristics such as infidelity or revealing intimate details shared during marriage could very likely lead to a high-conflict divorce (Polak & Saini, 2019). In such situations, the children of the divorcing individuals would most likely draw pessimistic conclusions, leading to emotional or physical disconnection from one or both parents, typically the father (Moila, 2023).

The challenges mentioned above often lead men to adopt unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as smoking, drinking, overeating or undereating, and engaging in non-committal intimate relationships (Reid, 2010). These behaviours can exacerbate mental health issues such as guilt, anxiety, loneliness, and depression (Richardson et al., 2021). Men are also at greater risk for physical health problems after divorce, such as high blood pressure and cardiovascular diseases, including strokes and heart attacks (Bonach, 2008; Bronselaer et al., 2008).

Child support & financial assistance

Under Islamic Sharia, in the Maldives, fathers who are financially capable of supporting their children or earning more than necessary for their sustenance are obligated to bear the expenses of their children even after divorce (Family Act, 2000; Saad & Trakic, 2021). This can be particularly challenging for men with minimal income, who not only lose daily contact with their children but also struggle to meet the increased economic needs of their children as they now reside in separate dwellings which leads to increased expenditure (Andreasson & Johansson, 2016).

Children's expenses fluctuate with inflation and other economic factors (Farooq, 2020). Despite this, the Maldivian government has implemented a fixed minimum amount for child support after divorce (Family Act, 2000). Records from the Maldives Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Services (MGFSS, 2019) indicate an increase in cases of fathers avoiding child support. Contributing factors for such negligence may include a lack of motivation, education, or responsibility, as well as substance abuse or unrealistic expectations of fatherhood (Bradshaw et al., 2002; Salami & Okeke, 2018).

Miller and Mincy (2012) found a strong correlation between child support debt and fathers' lack of involvement with their children, which is mostly influenced by the relationship between divorced parents. Fathers who maintain a close relationship with their children are more likely to fulfil their child support obligations, which largely depends on how well the divorced parents can cooperate (Natalier & Hewitt, 2010). In the Maldives, the judiciary does not allow fathers with pending child support debt to remarry (Family Regulation - Maldives, 2022). Otherwise, pending child support debt is considered by the Court only when the custodial parent files a case against the father for negligence. Further research is needed to assess the effectiveness of this measure in ensuring the well-being of children and their custodial parents. Typically, custody is granted to mothers, especially when daughters or young children are involved, under Islamic Sharia law (Family Act, 2000). This way, mothers are burdened to play the roles of both parents; to provide and nurture. The same will be reversed when fathers have custody (Salami & Okeke, 2018).

The economic and financial background of the fathers creates numerous challenges to their emotional health and family relationships, contributing to absenteeism (Turner & Waller, 2017). For fathers unable to provide child support due to economic/financial circumstances, it is suggested that the government provide a mechanism through social welfare regimens to improve their financial situation (Turner & Waller, 2017). Policymakers should determine whether such support should be offered through cash transfers or economic resource transfers. Long-term empowerment of beneficiaries, rather than indefinite state support, is preferred (Ansari et al., 2012).

Many countries with systems that require fathers to take financial responsibility for their children offer unemployment benefits to jobless fathers (Hodges, 2020). For example, the 'Unemployed Fathers' program introduced by the Aid to Families with Dependent of Children in the United States, provides support to

poor families where the father is unemployed. However, such programs typically consider the circumstances leading to unemployment, such as medical issues or company closure.

Although there are no schemes to offer unemployment benefits for jobless people in the Maldives, the government does provide a cash transfer for single parents accorded through the Social Protection Act, 2/2014 as 'Single Parent Allowance' (ADB, 2012). This is available to custodial parents whose income is below the threshold determined by the National Social Protection Agency (NSPA). Since mothers usually receive custody (UNFPA, 2004), they are likely the primary beneficiaries of this allowance. This system is inadequate in helping, empowering, and motivating fathers to take financial responsibility for their children. This applies to both the fathers who are willing to pay the child support but are unable to, and the fathers who are unwilling to pay and avoid paying child support. The state interventions for these cases should be different. The former should be empowered through social welfare and security, while the latter should be held accountable for negligence and irresponsibility.

Psychological & mental help

One of the biggest challenges to mental health promotion among men is their reluctance to seek help (Sharp et al., 2022). They neither know where to turn for help nor want to acknowledge their need. This reluctance is often driven by a fear of appearing weak, as well as the stigma surrounding domestic violence, which typically focuses on male perpetrators (Olliffe et al., 2022). Even in the divorce cases, women are more likely to seek mental healthcare than men (Bracke et al., 2010). Many men avoid confronting their emotions by overworking or resorting to a pub or gym - or blaming their ex-spouse for their distress (Reid, 2010). Normally, such behaviours are only short-lived. However, when such behaviours are prolonged psychological assistance is needed to foster optimism for the future. Some individuals become stuck in a cycle, repeatedly reliving, and discussing the divorce with their former spouse. Research suggests this may be a subconscious attempt to maintain contact with their ex-partner (Rocheleau, 2021).

Family laws in most countries require couples who seek divorce to attend counselling sessions before finalising their decision (Bonach, 2008). In the Maldives, the Conciliation Division for Family Matters (CDFM) is mandated to offer counselling sessions to couples when one partner opposes the divorce (Family Act, 2000). According to the Family Court (2016), 44 assessments were conducted in 2016 based on complaints filed to the CDFM.

Although counselling is mandated in many countries, few include psychological support as part of family law (Bonach, 2008). In cases of high-conflict divorces involving children, courts should adopt a multidisciplinary approach and prioritise child-centred decisions (Joyce, 2016). Counselling should be offered to both parents, addressing co-parenting, co-existence, and individual well-being during the transition (Hald et al., 2020). A community-based mental health approach should also incorporate gender-specific strategies, as it is important to frame conversations in ways that resonate with potential male mental help seekers (Sharp et al., 2022; Seidler et al., 2018). Addressing men's reluctance to seek mental health support is especially crucial.

Forgiveness Therapy & Co-parenting

One of the most impactful mental health approaches for handling separation and divorce is forgiveness interventions, which has shown positive outcomes for both individuals (Zarei et al., 2018; Rivera-Ottenberger et al., 2021). These interventions help replace negative emotions such as anger, guilt, resentment, and fear with positive emotions such as empathy and compassion, making the process easier to cope with (Bonach, 2008). Similar interventions have demonstrated improvements in mental, physical, and emotional health, and increased chances of remarriage later in life (Safarpour et al., 2021). Forgiveness interventions are particularly effective in high-conflict divorces involving children (Joyce, 2016).

Many fathers fear missing out on their children's lives as they grow up (Sharp et al., 2022). This fear can be alleviated when divorced individuals cooperate in raising their children (Natalier & Hewitt, 2010). Nunes-Costa et al., (2009) define co-parenting as "the joint and reciprocal involvement of both parents in the education and decision-making about their children's lives. Cooperative parents prioritise their children's well-being while creating and maintaining a constructive relationship, with new, more flexible boundaries between one another" (p. 388). A social service approach can be significant during this difficult transition. For example, 'case managers' could help families resolve disputes and disagreements in favour of the children or the divorcing individuals (Catlett & McKenry, 2004). This support can help the fathers stay connected with their children and find new ways to remain involved during the transition (Amato & Dorius, 2010). For such an approach, social service workers need to be well-equipped to facilitate parenting plans (Mundalamo, 2016). Although these interventions are relatively new to the Maldivian system, it is important to educate all stakeholders about these approaches and make such services accessible to the public. This will help make transitions healthier for the families (Joyce, 2016).

In summary, Maldives Family Law needs to incorporate mechanisms that support divorcing individuals in forgiving each other and moving forward. Furthermore, in cases where children are involved, both parents will continue to have responsibilities toward their children even after divorce, and it is crucial to explore and implement interventions to ensure these responsibilities are effectively managed.

Methodology

The primary objective of this qualitative research is to explore the post-divorce adjustment process among Maldivian men and identify necessary policy interventions. The study does not aim to generalise findings across the entire Maldives. Data were collected through a focus group discussion (FGD) and individual face-to-face interviews with 10 divorced men. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure the inclusion of at least six men who have experienced divorce. Sampling considered data saturation (Malterud et al., 2016) to ensure comprehensive and meaningful insights. Individual interviews were conducted with six participants, while an FGD with four participants was held via

Google Meet online platform. Having children was not a criterion for participation.

The interviews sought to understand the challenges faced by divorce men, its impacts on daily life, and elicit their perspectives on required policy changes. The FGD, conducted after the individual interviews, focused on the same topics to triangulate, and deepen the exploration of grievances and potential policy improvements for post-divorce well-being. Both interviews and the FGD followed semi-structured guides and were conducted in Dhivehi to allow participants to express themselves in their native language. Conversations were recorded, transcribed, and translated into English. Data collection took place in October 2022.

Patterns and general themes from the conversations were drawn through thematic analysis using the themes identified from previous literature. These themes include mental, physical, social, and economic challenges, relationship with the children (where applicable), child support provision, marriage duration, the role of psychological support during and after divorce, and necessary interventions when children are involved. The analysis was conducted manually which was posing given the small sample size. The identified themes were cross-checked and validated by the second author.

Results

For the analysis, interview participants were categorised into three groups based on their socioeconomic backgrounds: Category A (highest socioeconomic status), Category B (middle socioeconomic status), and Category C (lowest socioeconomic status). These categories were defined using the average monthly income of Maldivian men (MVR 12,196) as reported in the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (NBS, 2018). Economic status and the duration of each participant’s previous marriage were recorded during the interviews but not during the FGD. A summary of the demographic details for participants in both the interviews and the FGD is presented in Table 1.

*Table 1. Interview & FGD participants
(Codes A#, B#, and C# are interviews, Code D# is FGD)*

Participant Code	Age	Employment Status	Socioeconomic Status	Children	Who Initiated the Divorce?	Duration of the Marriage
AI	49	Job	Category A	Yes	Participant	Less than 5 years
AII	45	Job	Category A	Yes	Participant	More than 5 years
BI	28	Job	Category B	Yes	Participant	Less than 5 years
BII	36	Job	Category B	Yes	Former Partner	Less than 5 years
CI	28	Self Employed	Category C	Yes	Former Partner	Less than 5 years
CII	29	Job	Category C	No	Former Partner	Less than 5 years
DI	28	Job	(Not sought)	Yes	Former Partner	(Not sought)
DII	37	Job	(Not sought)	Yes	Participant	(Not sought)
DIII	45	Job	(Not sought)	Yes	Participant	(Not sought)
DIV	44	Job	(Not sought)	Yes	Former Partner	(Not sought)

The experience of divorce

Most interview participants described their divorces as tumultuous and disruptive. One participant characterised his experience as “a total disaster, and I have barely survived it” (AII). Even those whose divorces were less chaotic noted significant shifts in their outlook on life. An exception among the participants described his divorce positively, saying:

“...I must admit that the day we separated, that actual moment, was the best moment of my life. I felt free from a huge burden I had endured for 3 long years.”
(AI)

Marriage is a commitment to love and respect each other for a lifetime. However, when this commitment remains unfulfilled over time, it can lead to mental and emotional discord. One participant reflected on this:

“The repetitive occurrence of many negative experiences and feelings is what leads to a divorce. And then there will be so many adjustment issues. Separation is not easy. At least one of the individuals will be deeply hurt by it.” (A11)

Although interview participants were not asked about the causes of their divorces, their descriptions shed light on underlying reasons. According to FGD participants DI, DIII, and DIV, major factors include interference from others (including family members), infidelity, lack of sexual intimacy, and breakdowns in understanding between partners.

Coping with Divorce

When discussing how men cope post-divorce, all FGD participants agreed that engaging in physically demanding activities such as football or fishing was beneficial. They also noted an increase in smoking and coffee consumption among men who had experienced divorce, including themselves. Many preferred solitude to avoid discussing their divorce with others, and several focused more on work and career as a distraction. Several interview participants expressed how negative thoughts related to their divorce overwhelmed them when they were not completely occupied with demanding work. One participant shared:

“I work in a resort. And that one weekly off day becomes the most depressing day of the week. Because I don’t have any work to do, and I don’t have any other distractions, the thoughts about the failed marriage come ruining my day off.”
(CII)

Support Mechanism

When asked about their biggest supporters during and after the divorces, all interview participants mentioned relying on either family or friends. Among the six interviewees, four (AI, BII, C1, & C2) sought more support from friends than family. AI and CI received no family support during or after their divorces, while BII and CII avoided discussing their divorces with family due to their reserved

nature. Participants who turned to friends often did so to distract themselves rather than delve into the details of their divorces.

Two participants (AII & BI) received support from their families. One participant shared

“My mom supported me the most. She even took care of my child after the divorce.”
(AI)

In addition to exploring the emotional difficulties of coping with their divorces and the limited support mechanism men utilised to process their emotions, the discussions also highlighted specific challenges they experienced.

Challenges – Societal judgement

All participants experienced societal scrutiny fuelled by rumours, gossip, and sometimes outright falsehoods about their divorces. However, the intensity of this scrutiny varied among individuals. One participant described the impact of public perception on his career and personal life:

“... when the divorce happened, many people believed I was at fault. Because of my public career and how well-known I was, she [ex-wife] was motivated to tarnish my reputation, especially given the political situation of our country. I was kind of terrorised by her actions. She and her allies threatened to ruin my image, which they tried to do as well! They even contacted my workplace and asked to remove me ...” (Code redacted)

Some scrutiny was intentionally orchestrated by involved parties, while others faced societal judgement due to the community norms of gossip and judgement. One participant expressed:

“People constantly talking about it (the divorce), even if to make light of the situation, pulls me back into that difficult time. I try to avoid dwelling on the divorce, but when they talk about it, my thoughts are dragged back into that mess.”
(CI)

Another participant highlighted the challenges of living in a small island community:

“The thing about living on the island is that news and rumours spread so quickly, and so do the falsehoods. ... People started looking at me as if I were a criminal.”
(CII)

FGD participants (DI, DII, and DIV) noted that rumours and lies spread due to various reasons, including the husband wronging the wife, families and friends crossing boundaries, women being more vocal, and attempts by former partners or their associates to diminish the other party.

Overall, the study illustrates how divorce exposes individuals to harsh societal judgement and the pervasive impact of gossip and rumours in small communities.

Challenges - Relationship with the child

A significant post-divorce challenge for men, as identified in the interviews, is maintaining a healthy relationship with their children. Nine of the 10 participants had children with their former wives. They shared various difficulties in continuing their relationships with their children.

One participant described how geographic separation exacerbated by his employment on a resort island made regular contact with his child nearly impossible:

“Especially when I lost contact with my child, it was very difficult. Mainly because I was in the resort [where I was employed]. I couldn’t see my child. And there was no way I could even call or video call. The relationship with my ex-wife was not amicable. I got very lonely because of the lack of contact with my child. Children have this tendency to make you feel better just with their presence.” (CI)

Custodial arrangements often result in fathers losing daily contact with their children leading to mothers making most decisions regarding the children while fathers bear financial responsibilities. One participant explained:

“...My son is in LKG [lower kindergarten] now, and there are so many school events that I don’t get informed about. I don’t even see my child’s school report cards or portfolio at the end of the school term.” (BII)

Participants also highlighted cases where mothers redirected their animosity toward the father onto the children, demeaning them in front of their children.

Two interview participants experienced a complete loss of contact with their children due to contentious post-divorce dynamics. One participant shared:

“I proposed to uphold all the expenses of the child after the separation. But the mother did not want me to contribute financially or even meet my child. It was my family who visited the child and spent time with her until that too was cut off. Any attempt to assert my rights led to media attacks.” (AI)

Another participant, despite a favourable court ruling, struggled to see his child due to continued resistance by the mother:

“Even though the Magistrate’s decision came in my favour, she [ex-wife] still refuses to let me meet the child. The judiciary isn’t addressing this. But when our fight aggravates, our conflicts directly affect my child, and I don’t want my child to suffer because of us. So, I have decided to wait until my child is older before pursuing it further.” (BII).

FGD participants (DI, DII, and DIV) agreed that such behaviours adversely affect children’s mental well-being. They emphasised that parents should avoid disparaging each other in front of their children to prevent negative impacts their behaviour. An interview participant had a similar experience:

“She started involving our child in the conflicts, badmouthing me and my current wife to our child, which negatively affected our relationship. This happened for a

long, long time until my child started living with us and realised that it was not the reality. ... It was emotionally challenging until my child came to live with us and realised the truth.” (AII).

FGD participants (DI, DII, and DIV) explained that these incidents embeds a constant fear of losing contact with their children and that this fear exacerbates their emotional state post-divorce.

Navigating relationships with children post-divorce presents significant challenges for men, compounded by custodial arrangements and contentious behaviours that impact both fathers' mental health and children's well-being.

Mental & physical challenges

Many participants from both the interviews and the FGD (AII, BI, BII, CI, CII, DII, & DIII) reported experiencing depression and severe anxiety following their divorces. One participant shared:

“... It made me very depressed and less motivated to focus on work. I was constantly moody, which affected my job performance. Working in hospitality requires us to be very warm and joyful around tourists, which I couldn't manage. I was summoned by HR (Human Resources department) several times for not smiling while serving customers. It got bad!” (CI)

Another participant described the emotional void left by his children's absence:

“I miss them (the children) a lot because they were my comfort after work. Nights were especially hard, and I couldn't sleep in the early days. Even now, when I don't have work, I don't feel like leaving my room or meeting anyone. I just feel depressed.” (CII)

FGD participants echoed these sentiments, reporting similar feelings. DII and DIII talked about self-isolating in the initial days after divorce and struggling with sleepless nights. However, one participant, who described his marriage as “a big emotional turmoil,” reported improvement in mental health after the divorce:

“I believe that once something is over, it is over and there is no point dwelling on it. You have to move on. Plus, I learnt that you don't really know your partner until you live with them. So, I wasn't thinking much about the failed marriage.” (AI)

Apart from mental and emotional challenges, participants also reported physical health impacts. One participant revealed:

“I noticed changes in my face and was advised to consult a doctor. That's when I found out I had a mini-stroke due to the constant high blood pressure!” (AII).

Challenges – Child support & financing

FGD participants discussed the rising issue of child support debt among estranged fathers. They identified several potential reasons for this increase: 1) negligence

and irresponsibility of fathers, 2) economic hardships, 3) lack of motivation from mothers to plan and manage finances, and 4) limited father involvement in child upbringing. Some interview participants echoed these concerns. One remarked:

“There should be a mechanism to co-parent and manage the child’s finances. When we go to Court, child support is often set at MVR 2000 per month. Some fathers pay only that much, thinking it’s sufficient. So easy, right? But there are so many other expenses.” (AII)

Another participant expressed concern about transparency:

“One thing that bothers me is that even though the Court mandates a specific amount for child support, I don’t see how this money is spent. I mean, I do pay a certain amount as child support through the Court! There is room to doubt whether it is used for the child’s needs. I want to see how this money is allocated to ensure where it is lacking and what needs to be done for my child’s well-being.” (CI)

FGD participants noted that poor financial planning and management significantly affect fathers from low-income groups (DII, DIII, and DIV). While discussing the negligence of some fathers, participants (DI, DII, DIII, & DIV) acknowledged the difficulty of involving such fathers in this research. According to participants DI and DIII, these fathers are unlikely to participate because they are aware of their negligence and prefer to avoid confrontation. Furthermore, the participants suggested that most men who did participate in this research likely had genuine concerns about their children or the circumstances surrounding their divorce.

Regarding post-divorce financial management, participant CII shared insights about the ‘Single Parent Allowance’ (SPA) provided to custodial parents. He expressed concerns that some divorced women exploit the system, stating:

“There is a group of people who get divorced and break up their families for no substantial reason. They do not value the family they have built and walk away, knowing they will be financially supported and have no further worries. The eligibility criteria for these allowances should be revised to ensure they are only provided to those truly in need, and perhaps even increased for those who deserve more.” (CII)

This participant implied a link between the availability of the Single Parent Allowance and the high divorce rate in the Maldives. He further added:

“If the father is providing sufficient financial support for the child, then it should be up to the mother to earn for her own expenses, or the responsibility should be on whomever is now responsible for her.” (CII)

Support through family law

When discussing the challenges they faced after their divorce, all ten participants reported experiencing significant mental and emotional difficulties, emphasising

the need for psychological support. One participant shared:

“It has been almost four years since the divorce, and my mental health kept deteriorating until the third year when I finally decided to seek counselling. Through those sessions, I realised I had waited far too long. If I had gotten help earlier, I might have handled things differently. It could have made the situation less messy if both of us had received help.” (CI)

This participant also voiced concerns about the varying quality of family services across the Maldives, recounting:

“When a couple experiences a fallout, island councillors usually intervene before officials from the Ministry arrive. And you know what? When one of the councillors came to resolve our issue, the first thing he said to me was, “Fegh dhentha? okay vaane hurihaa kameh” (“Want a cigarette? That will make everything okay!”). I do not smoke, but I felt belittled by his remark. This is certainly not the kind of person you want intervening in such a sensitive case. Having trained professionals handle these challenging situations would be much more helpful.” (CI)

FGD participants agreed that post-divorce mental health support could have a positive impact on decision-making and emotional management. They highlighted the importance of adopting a gender-specific approach to mental health promotion and services, as it could encourage more individuals to seek help. Additionally, they also expressed concerns that a standard community-based approach might not be effective enough for individuals in close-knit societies, where individuals may struggle to trust the system with their concerns.

Co-parenting & Parental Plans:

Most participants from the FGD and interviews (AI, AII, BI, BII, CI, CII, DII, and DIV) emphasised the need for mechanisms to assist in planning and managing the upbringing of their children. They expressed a strong desire to be more involved in their children’s lives, including active participation in financial planning. One participant stated:

“I cover his medical and education-related expenses, and on top of that, I used to pay around MVR 4000 to 5000 per month. Back then, the designated amount for child support was only MVR 400. But there was no way to plan spending and no way to manage that. In a high-conflict divorce like ours, I think the help of a social service worker with such a plan could be significant.” (AII)

Participants AI, BII, and CII noted that the unstable relationships with their former partners were the primary reason the mothers do not want them involved in raising their children. Participant CI felt that his child’s mother saw him merely as a financial provider.

“I mean, currently we don’t have any plan other than the agreements made about child support in the Court. When other things are considered, all such decisions are made by the mother. She doesn’t even discuss it with me or ask for my opinion. So, in a way, we are ruining our child’s future because of the misunderstandings

between us. I don't want that to happen to my child. Just because we divorced, it should not affect my child's well-being." (CI)

In discussing family-related interventions, two out of the six participants (BII & CI) expressed concerns about the implementation of family laws and policies. They believe that no matter how well-designed an intervention may be, it is ineffective if not executed properly by trained professionals. One participant remarked:

"Honestly, I am not very aware of the family laws, but after learning from you that interventions like parenting plans exist elsewhere, I think it will be helpful to our society as well. And it should be implemented effectively for everyone." (AI).

Two interview participants (BII and CI) also noted that their complaints against the mothers of their children were not given adequate attention by the relevant authorities. Additionally, participant AI stressed the importance of teaching life, family, and marriage values through the education system, as society often overlooks these aspects. He stated:

"In the Maldives, we do not teach how to lead a good life. It is more like, yes, this is the age you study, this is the age you get married, and this is the age you have a child. They don't teach you the values of any of it. If this is not taught to the students, laws alone cannot protect families." (AI)

The ten male participants who volunteered to take part in the interviews and FGD affirmed that divorce is an emotional and challenging transition. When children are involved, unresolved conflicts between the divorced couple tend to deepen, negatively impacting the children and often discouraging the divorced men from nurturing their bonds with their children.

Discussion

Divorce presents numerous post-separation challenges, affecting mental and physical health, financial stability, societal pressures, and cultural expectations. The research participants highlighted various interventions that could help alleviate these challenges. Specialised counselling services, well-structured parenting plans, and the promotion of co-parenting were seen as crucial to easing the burden of divorce. Participants also stressed the need for awareness programs, education, and properly trained personnel to implement these interventions effectively, fostering a healthier family environment post-divorce.

Wagner (2020) suggests that a positive attitude toward divorce combined with poor marital quality is a leading cause of many separations. The findings from this research align with those conclusions, indicating that infidelity, sexual dissatisfaction, lack of understanding, and external interference were the primary factors contributing to divorce. These issues can degrade the quality of their marriage over time, influencing how individuals manage post-divorce adjustments. Birditt et al. (2010) suggest that couples tend to grow more tolerant as their marriage progresses, adopting more constructive behaviours. However, most

participants in this study divorced within the first five years of marriage, with one participant stating that they had requested a divorce during the first year, delayed only by their partner's pregnancy.

Unresolved conflicts often persist post-divorce, especially when children are involved, overshadowing any positive memories from the marriage. Among the six men interviewed individually, only one reported no ongoing conflict with his former partner post-divorce; this couple had no children together. As evidenced by prior research (Aboobakuru & Riyaz, 2021; Amato & Dorius, 2010), the presence of children complicates the divorce process.

Overall, divorced men face several challenges, including mental and physical health decline, societal judgement, strained relationships with their children, and additional financial burdens. These challenges are further explored below.

Mental & Physical Well-being

The Grief Cycle (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005), which includes denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance, is often used to describe the emotional stages following divorce. These stages vary in duration depending on individual circumstances. The cycle helps explain the mental challenges men experience post-divorce. Out of the 10 informants in this research, five men had their divorces initiated by their partners. These men likely experienced denial, as evidenced by their reluctance to grant the divorce even in its final stages. Anger usually follows denial and tends to dissipate quickly in low-conflict divorces, especially with the presence of forgiveness (Gordon et al., 2007). However, in high-conflict divorces, anger can persist indefinitely, especially when children are involved, (Gordon, 2007; Visser et al., 2017). The findings from this study are similar, with participants who experienced high conflict divorces still harbouring some degree of resentment towards their former partners.

Bargaining, marked by longing for the good times with their former partner, was particularly evident among men who did not initiate the divorce. Interestingly, none of the participants attempted reconciliation after the divorce, despite longing for it. Depression was common, characterised by sadness, loss of interest in daily activities, and a tendency to self-isolate. However, by the time of this study, most participants had reached some degree of acceptance, with those without children seeming to find acceptance more easily.

Previous research suggests that men are more likely to experience negative health outcomes post-divorce compared to women (Bonach, 2008), as men often report higher marital satisfaction (Leopold, 2018). This study corroborates these findings, with two participants reporting significant health issues during and after their divorces—one experiencing high blood pressure and another losing consciousness the day before the divorce.

Societal Judgement

Maldivian islands are small and geographically dispersed, with close-knit communities of only a few hundred people, except in the Malé Area and a few other cities. As a result, significant life events, such as divorce, often become widespread topics of discussion (Romero-Frias, 2015). All participants in this research reported facing societal scrutiny after their divorces.

A pattern emerged linking public prominence and the severity of societal judgement. Participants from higher socio-economic categories (Category A) faced harsher judgement due to the rumours surrounding their divorces, often jeopardising their careers. In contrast, participants from lower socio-economic categories (Category B and C) experienced more localised scrutiny within their immediate social circles.

The spread of such rumours stems from people's tendency to believe stories that align with pre-existing beliefs and experiences (Pennycook & Rand, 2021). Reported cases of male perpetrators are significantly more common than female perpetrators (MFGSS, 2019). Similarly, female victims outnumber male victims in reported cases (Koketso et al., 2019). For decades, men have often been scrutinised due to societal views on patriarchy, toxic masculinity, and male chauvinism. This culture, which suspects men of wrongdoing even when they are not at fault, was highlighted as a significant issue by participants. This culture leaves vulnerable men without effective means to protect their dignity and well-being.

Relationship with children

Maintaining a healthy relationship with children post-divorce is crucial for easing the transition for parents and children (Joyce, 2016). Among the research participants, only one had custody of their child. This participant was noticeably happier and more comfortable with life post-divorce than the others. He described the time without custody as particularly challenging. Non-custodial parents, often fathers, must exert extra effort to maintain contact with their children, but this effort frequently falls short (Lin & Brown, 2021). The study revealed that strained relationships with former partners or lack of motivation often prevent fathers from staying involved in their children's lives. Two participants reported being completely cut off from their children by their ex-wives and chose not seeking legal assistance to avoid further distress for their children.

Additionally, many participants expressed frustration at being excluded from decisions regarding their children. Fathers who maintain regular contact do not wish to be involved solely in financial matters—they desire active participation in their children's upbringing, including education, extra-curricular activities, and social life. These sentiments echo the "fear of missing out" that non-resident fathers often experience (Sharp et al., 2022), emphasising the importance of cooperative co-parenting (Natalier & Hewitt, 2010).

Child Support & Financing

Under Islamic Shariah, men are obliged to financially support their ex-wives during the Iddat period (the 3-months a woman must observe immediately after the death of her husband or after a divorce, during which she may not marry another man) (Family Act, 2000). After this period, men are only financially responsible for children from their marriage. However, the research revealed growing concerns about 'absent' fathers who neglect these responsibilities.

Several factors contribute to this negligence: patriarchal attitudes, a lack of education on family planning, and the strained relationships between divorced individuals (Salami & Okeke, 2018; Koketso et al., 2019). FDG participants confirmed that fathers who neglect their financial responsibilities are unlikely

to participate in research, preferring to remain under the radar. They suggest addressing these issues through education and systemic changes.

Additionally, some fathers, particularly those from lower socio-economic categories, feel discouraged by the lack of financial transparency in managing child-related expenses. This burden often prompts some men to remain in unhealthy marriages to avoid financial pressures. This aligns with findings by Andreasson & Johansson (2016), where participants expressed concerns about the burden of high child support debt.

These factors can make it challenging for non-resident fathers to take full financial responsibility for their children (Andersson & Johnson, 2016). This lack of involvement in their child's upbringing can lead to an emotional disconnect (Koketso et al., 2019). Participants in this research expressed frustration about the unfairness of being solely responsible for financial support while the mother makes all other child-related decisions.

The challenges men face post-divorce differ significantly from those faced by women (McLindon, 1987; Koketso et al., 2019; Mendoza, 2020; Aboobakuru & Riyaz, 2021). Thus, how men navigate these challenges and the subsequent impact on their lives post-divorce can be expected to vary widely.

The Post-Divorce 'Move-On' Process

Following divorce, many men struggle to reintegrate into their social lives due to societal scrutiny and invasive questions about their divorce. This social pressure leads to isolation, worsening depressive moods and anxiety. Men from higher socio-economic categories experienced greater public scrutiny, which hindered their social and professional lives. Participants reported that this scrutiny led them to adopt unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as increased caffeine intake, smoking, and distancing themselves from friends and family. These unhealthy habits, combined with trouble sleeping and fatigue, worsened their mental health, especially in the early post-divorce period. These findings are consistent with prior research (Reid, 2010; Sharp et al., 2022).

Post-divorce, the mother usually becomes the custodial parent, leaving the father as the displaced parent. Catlett and McKenry (2004) indicate most fathers see a decline in contact with their children after the first year of separation. The findings from this study show similar trends, with some fathers experiencing a disconnect from their children due to the custodial parent curtailing the father's involvement in day-to-day activities and highlights the mother's role in facilitating cooperation and understanding to maintain a healthy relationship between the children and their father.

Regarding career responses, two trends emerged: some men focused intensely on work, while others struggled to concentrate. This research supports the notion that some men overwork to avoid confronting negative emotions post-divorce (Reid, 2010). However, in contrast to findings from Whitton et al. (2013) and Wagner (2020), which suggest that men in remarriages tend to be emotionally distant, participants in this study expressed happiness and commitment in their second marriages.

A person's post-divorce well-being, relationships, and social interactions shape their recovery. While some challenges such as grieving and mood swings are

inevitable, others such as lifestyle and societal influences, can be mitigated through targeted interventions such as family-friendly policies that are both gender-centric and child-centric where applicable (Seidler et al., 2018; Joyce, 2016).

Policy level changes

The findings highlight the need for policy changes to help individuals transition more smoothly post-divorce.

Mental Health Support Through Family Law

Divorce often triggers significant emotional distress, requiring interventions such as counselling. Forgiveness is key to reducing hurt and resentment, and forgiveness interventions during the divorce process can promote a healthier recovery (Zarei et al., 2018; Rivera-Ottenberger et al., 2021) and improve the chances of successful remarriage later in life (Safarpour et al., 2021). However, access to mental health services in the Maldives is limited by long waiting lists for government services and the high cost of private care. Mandating mental health support through Family Law could significantly enhance the well-being of those undergoing divorce.

Prior literature suggests that men are often reluctant to seek mental or psychological help (Bracke et al., 2010; Hald et al., 2020). However, this research does not conclusively determine whether such hesitation exists among the participants, particularly given the shortage of accessible psychological support services. While participants did not directly indicate reluctance, they emphasised the need for accessible services and expressed concerns about the poorly managed system in the islands, which may further deter service use. In a geographically dispersed small island state like the Maldives, residents of close-knit islands face challenges in accessing these services, and when available, they often lack privacy.

Co-Parenting and Parental Plans

The effective co-parenting is crucial for divorced individuals, especially when children are involved. Counselling alone is not enough; divorced parents need structured parenting plans that ensure cooperation (Natalier & Hewitt, 2010; Catlett & McKenry, 2004). Participants in this research emphasised the importance of parenting plans with social service worker involvement, especially in high-conflict divorce, to ensure children's well-being.

In summary, in-depth conversations with 10 divorced men in the Maldives reveal that misunderstandings and conflicts between divorced individuals can strain father-child relationships and affect men's social standing. To better support men post-divorce, robust psychological interventions, parenting plans, and co-parenting strategies are necessary. Authorities should prioritise family-friendly policies that consider both gender and child welfare, helping divorced individuals navigate their transitions more effectively.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Family Act & Regulations

Family law plays a crucial role in achieving the goals related to family welfare. This research, along with existing literature, suggests that mandated and accessible counselling sessions for divorced individuals could significantly alleviate the challenges they face post-divorce. These sessions could be an extension of the services currently offered by the Conciliation Division for Family Matters of the Family Court, which are now available only to couples where one partner does not want a divorce. Implementing such counselling sessions could help mitigate conflicts between divorced individuals, reducing the negative public scrutiny they often face. Additionally, incorporating similar psychosocial sessions into the premarital programs conducted by the Family Court could serve as a preventative measure against high-conflict divorces (Visser et al., 2017).

Furthermore, the introduction of forgiveness interventions in mental health services for family or relationship conflicts, such as divorce, could be beneficial. These interventions can help individuals overcome negative emotions such as guilt, anger, and resentment, replacing them with positive emotions such as empathy, gratitude, and compassion. Consequently, forgiveness interventions can promote a healthier post-divorce life, enabling divorced individuals to coexist and co-parent effectively when children are involved.

The Family Act (2000) outlines the post-divorce responsibilities of parents in the chapters on “Custody” and “Upbringing Children and Costs of their Maintenance.” Authorities must ensure that divorced parents fulfil their responsibilities and prevent any neglect of their children. In high-conflict divorces, parental resentment can negatively impact childcare responsibilities. To avoid this, many advanced countries such as Sweden and Norway, renowned for their family-friendly policies, have implemented co-parenting styles and parenting plans with the assistance of caseworkers or social service workers (Mundalamo, 2016). Adopting similarly strict parenting plans, guided by Islamic Sharia, could be beneficial in the Maldives. Even in low-conflict divorces, the adoption of suitable co-parenting styles can ensure shared responsibilities and transparent financial management.

National Mental Health Policy 2015-2025

The current National Mental Health Policy lacks a gender-sensitive approach, which may prevent men from accessing necessary mental health services. Due to the high incidence of violence and abuse against women, the system, with its limited resources, tends to overlook men who need similar support, especially post-divorce. Even NGOs, that naturally focus on protecting the vulnerable in the Maldives, primarily concentrate on women and children. This is evidenced by the absence of NGOs in the Maldives dedicated to promoting mental health among men. Parenting skills programs, prevention efforts, conflict resolution, anger management courses, and relationship counselling under the National Mental

Health Policy are inadequate and inaccessible. Making these services widely available across the country, with the support of professionals, could potentially reduce divorce rates and improve the well-being of dysfunctional families.

Other Recommendations

Addressing the growing concern over increasing child support debt for fathers is crucial (Lin & Brown, 2021). Close evaluation of such cases, with the assistance of social service workers or caseworkers, can help determine whether the issue stems from negligence or incapability. If negligence is the cause, fathers should face legal consequences. If incapability is the issue, authorities could implement support mechanisms to ensure middle- to low-income divorced fathers have adequate economic resources to support their children effectively (Aguirre, 2019).

There is also a need for professionally trained staff in the social sector to make these services accessible nationwide. Although the geography of the Maldives presents challenges and incurs expenses, the well-being of the population must be prioritised. Additionally, promoting family values at an early age through accessible platforms could help prevent conflicts that lead to family breakdowns.

Limitations of this Study & Future Research

This research used a qualitative approach to explore the lived experiences of Maldivian men during and after divorce. The in-depth interviews provided valuable insights, but the small sample size limits the ability to generalise the findings to the entire population.

While the Maldives has the highest divorce rate in the world, research into various aspects of divorce is sparse, and studies exploring men's divorce perspective were previously non-existent. Therefore, the findings from this study offer a useful foundation for further research, ideally involving a larger sample and incorporating a survey instrument based on these findings.

Although the 10 participants provided valuable insights into the challenges divorced men face, the study did not explore difficulties in finding new partners and rebuilding marriages, which could be useful for evidence-based policy interventions. Furthermore, exploring the grievances of non-resident fathers regarding co-parenting challenges from women's perspectives could provide comprehensive insights.

Conclusion

Conflicts between divorcing individuals significantly impact the challenges faced by men post-divorce, including societal scrutiny, strained relationships with children, and emotional distress. These issues can be alleviated through effective interventions such as forgiveness therapy, mental health services, and co-parenting plans involving social service workers. In addition to implementing these interventions, it is crucial to deploy trained and specialised professionals nationwide to address family-related conflicts and divorces. Introducing family-friendly policies can

also help prevent the conflicts that lead to family disintegration. research offers insights into previously unexplored aspects of divorce and related social issues in the Maldives, providing a basis for policymakers to develop effective solutions.

Declaration

This research was conducted as a partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Master of Arts in Social Policy at the Department of Social Sciences of the Maldives National University. Data collection followed approval from the MNU Research Ethics Committee (RE/2022/B-10).

References

- Aboobakuru, S. & Riyaz, A. (2021). Stress and coping resources of divorced women in the Maldives. *The Maldives National Journal of Research*, 9(1), 8-31.
- ADB. (2012). *Republic of Maldives: Updating and improving the social protection index: (R-CDTA) consultant's report*. Asian Development Bank. Retrieved from www.adb.org
- Aguirre, E. (2019). Do changes in divorce legislation have an impact on divorce rates? The case of unilateral divorce in Mexico. *Latin American Economic Review*, 28(1).
- Amato, P. R., & Dorius, C. (2010). Fathers, children, and divorce, In M. E. Lamb (Ed.), *The role of the father in child development* (pp. 177-200). New Jersey: Wiley.
- Andreasson, J., & Johansson, T. (2016). Becoming a half-time parent: Fatherhood after divorce. *Journal of Family Studies*, 25(1), 2-17.
- Ansari, S., Munir, K., & Gregg, T. (2012). Impact at the 'bottom of the pyramid': The role of social capital in capability development and community empowerment. *Journal of Management Studies*, 49(4), 813-842.
- Birditt, K. S., Brown, E., Orbuch, T. L., & McIlvane, J. M. (2010). Marital conflict behaviors and implications for divorce over 16 years. *Journal of marriage and the family*, 72(5), 1188-1204. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2010.00758.x>
- Bonach, K. (2008). Empirical support for the application of the forgiveness intervention model to postdivorce coparenting. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, 50(1), 38-54.
- Bracke, P., Colman, E., Symoens, S., & Van Praag, L. (2010). Divorce, divorce rates, and professional care seeking for mental health problems in Europe: a cross-sectional population-based study. *BMC Public Health*, 10(1).
- Bradshaw, J., Skinner, C., Stimson, C., & Williams, J. (2002). *Absent fathers?.* Routledge.
- Bronselaer, J., De Koker, B., & Van Peer, C. (2008). The impact of divorce on the health status of ex-partners. *Arch Public Health*, 66, 68-186.
- Catlett, B., & McKenry, P. (2004). *Class-based masculinities: Divorce, fatherhood,*

- and the hegemonic ideal. *Fathering: A Journal of Theory, Research, and Practice about Men as Fathers*, 2(2), 165-190.
- Family Act. (2000). Family Act 4/2000. Family Court.gov.mv. Available at: <http://familycourt.gov.mv/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Family-Act-English-Translation.pdf>
- Family Court (2016). Annual Report 2016. Maldives: Family Court.
- Family Regulation. (2022). Family Regulation 2022/R-99, Family Court.gov.mv. Available at: <https://familycourt.gov.mv/muhinmu-qavaaidhuthakaa-usoolthah/>
- Farooq, M. (2020). The application of the law on child custody in Maldives: Towards shared parental responsibilities. (Masters thesis). International Islamic University of Malaysia.
- Gordon, K. C., Baucom, D. H., & Snyder, D. K. (2007). Forgiveness in Couples: divorce, infidelity, and couples Therapy. In *Handbook of forgiveness*, 431-446.
- Hald, G. M., Strizzi, J. M., Cipric, A., & Sander, S. (2020). The divorce conflict scale. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, 61(2), 83-104.
- Hodges, L. (2020). Do low-income parents who receive unemployment insurance pay more child support? *Children and Youth Services Review*, 111, 104834.
- Joyce, A. (2016). High-conflict divorce: A form of child neglect. *Family Court Review*, 54(4), 642-656.
- Koketso, M. F., Calvin, M. J., Lehlokwe, S. I., & Mafa, P. (2019). Perspectives of single mothers on the socio-emotional and economic influence of ‘absent fathers’ in child’s life: A case study of rural community in South Africa. *e-BANGI*, 16, 1-12.
- Kübler-Ross, E., & Kessler, D. (2005). On grief and grieving: Finding the meaning of grief through the five stages of loss. Simon and Schuster.
- Leopold, T. (2018). Gender differences in the consequences of divorce: A study of multiple outcomes. *Demography*, 55(3), 769–797. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13524-018-0667-6>.
- Lin, I. F., & Brown, S. L. (2021). The economic consequences of grey divorce for women and men. *The Journals of Gerontology: Series B*, 76(10), 2073-2085.
- Malterud, K., Siersma, V. D., & Guassora, A. D. (2016). Sample size in qualitative interview studies: guided by information power. *Qualitative health research*, 26(13), 1753-1760.
- McLindon, J. B. (1987). Separate but unequal: The economic disaster of divorce for women and children. *Fam. LQ*, 21, 351.
- Mendoza, J. E., Tolba, M., & Saleh, Y. (2020). Strengthening marriages in Egypt: Impact of divorce on women. *Behavioral Sciences*, 10(1), 14.
- Miller, D. and Mincy, R. (2012). Falling further behind: Child support arrears and fathers’ labor force participation. *Social Service Review*, 86(4), 604-635.
- MGFSS. [Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Services]. (2019). Press release:

- Cases reported to and attended by the Ministry in September 2019. Maldives: Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Services. Retrieved from <http://gender.gov.mv/en?p=3867>
- Moila, W. (2023). The phenomenon of absent fatherhood: Perceptions, experiences and challenges of absent fathers and adolescent children. (Masters Thesis). University of the Western Cape.
- Mundalamo, N. (2016). The views of social service providers on the use of parenting plans for adolescents of divorced parents. (Masters thesis). Stellenbosch University.
- Natalier, K., & Hewitt, B. (2010). 'It's not just about the money': Non-resident fathers' perspectives on paying child support. *Sociology*, 44(3), 489-505.
- NBS. (2018). *Household income and expenditure survey (HIES) analytical report II: Household expenditure 2016. Male'*: National Bureau of Statistics.
- Nomani, M. Z. M., Mustafa, F., & Rauf, M. (2023). Discursive discourse on the breakdown theory of divorce and its Application in the shari'ah-compliant Maldives Family Act of 2000. *Manchester Journal of Transnational Islamic Law & Practice*, 19(3).
- Nunes-Costa, R. A., Lamela, D. J. P. V., & Figueiredo, B. F. C. (2009). *Psychosocial adjustment and physical health in children of divorce – Jornal de Pediatria*. <https://www.scielo.br/j/jped/a/fytp7MTrxfnnR7pwYfpZTkk/?format=pdf>
- Oliffe, J. L., Kelly, M. T., Gonzalez Montaner, G., Seidler, Z. E., Maher, B., & Rice, S. M. (2022). Men building better relationships: A scoping review. *Health Promotion Journal of Australia*, 33(1), 126-137.
- Pennycook, G., & Rand, D. (2021). The psychology of fake news. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 25(5), 388-402.
- Polak, S., & Saini, M. (2019). The complexity of families involved in high-conflict disputes: A postseparation ecological transactional framework. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, 60(2), 117-140.
- Reid, C. (2010). Untying the knot: Marriage, the State, and the case for their divorce. *Journal of Church and State*, 53(1), 132-133.
- Richardson, C., Robb, K. and O'Connor, R. (2021). A systematic review of suicidal behaviour in men: A narrative synthesis of risk factors. *Social Science & Medicine*, 276, 113831.
- Rivera-Ottenberger, D., Guzmán-González, M., Calderón, C., Yáñez-Yaben, S., & Comino, P. (2021). Forgiveness in the context of divorce: A cross-cultural measurement invariance study via multiple-group factor analysis (CFA) across Chile and Spain. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 18(16), 8236. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18168236>
- Rocheleau, S. (2021). What are the physical and psychological effects of divorce? [online] *Right Lawyers*.
- Romero-Frias, X. (2015). Between isolation and difference: Possibilities and peculiarities in contemporary practices in the Maldives. *Paper presented at*

- Sociology and Social Anthropology in/for South Asia Histories and Practices: A Publication orientation one-day seminar*, 12 December 2014.
- Saad, J. M., & Trakic, A. (2021). Islamic Family Law. In *Islamic Law in Malaysia* (pp. 43-61). Springer, Singapore.
- Safarpour, M., Bakhshipour, B., Abbasi, G. (2021). The effectiveness of forgiveness therapy on emotional divorce of betrayed couple. *Family Counselling and Psychotherapy*, 10(2), 137-164.
- Salami, I. A., & Okeke, C. I. (2018). Absent fathers' socio-economic status and perceptions of fatherhood as related to developmental challenges faced by children in South Africa. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 8(1), 1-7.
- Seidler, Z. E., Rice, S. M., Ogrodniczuk, J. S., Oliffe, J. L., & Dhillon, H. M. (2018). Engaging men in psychological treatment: *A scoping review*. *American journal of men's health*, 12(6), 1882-1900.
- Sharma, B. (2011). Mental and emotional impact of divorce on women. *Journal of the Indian academy of applied psychology*, 37(1), 125-131.
- Sharp, P., Bottorff, J., Rice, S., Oliffe, J., Schulenkorf, N., Impellizzeri, F. & Caperchione, C. (2022). People say men don't talk, well that's bullshit: A focus group study exploring challenges and opportunities for men's mental health promotion. *PLOS ONE*, 17(1), p.e0261997.
- Shazra, A., & Riyaz, A. (2022). Parental divorce as a predictor of attachment style in children's adult intimate relationships: Evidence from the Maldives. *The Maldives National Journal of Research*, 10 (1), 7-32.
- Shanoora, A., Hamsan, H. H., Abdullah, H., & Khir, A. M. (2020). Which is worse; divorce or conflict? Parental divorce, interparental conflict, and its impact on romantic relationship quality of young dating adults in the Maldives. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 10(15), 325-339.
- Sorensen, E. (2010). Rethinking public policy toward low-income fathers in the child support program. *Journal of Policy Analysis and management*, 29(3), 604-610.
- Stevenson, M. M., Braver, S., Ellman, I. M., & Votruba, A. M. (2013). Fathers, divorce, and child custody. In N J Cabrera & C. S. Tamix-LeMonda (Eds.), *Handbook of father involvement: Multidisciplinary perspectives*, (2nd ed., pp. 379-396). New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.
- Turner, K. J., & Waller, M. R. (2017). Indebted relationships: Child support arrears and nonresident fathers' involvement with children. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 79(1), 24-43.
- UNFPA. (2004). Family Law Report. Male': United National Family Protection Agency. United Nations International Children's Fund.
- Vanassche, S., Corijn, M., & Matthijs, K. (2015). Post-divorce family trajectories of men and women in Flanders. *Demographic Research*, 32, 859-872.
- Visser, M., Finkenauer, C., Schoemaker, K., Kluwer, E., Rijken, R. V. D., Lawick, J. V., ... & Lamers-Winkelmann, F. (2017). I'll never forgive you: High conflict

- divorce, social network, and co-parenting conflicts. *Journal of child and family studies*, 26, 3055-3066.
- Wagner, M. (2020). On increasing divorce risks. Divorce in Europe: New insights in trends, causes and consequences of relation break-ups, 37-61.
- Whitton, S. W., Stanley, S. M., Markman, H. J., & Johnson, C. A. (2013). Attitudes toward divorce, commitment, and divorce proneness in first marriages and remarriages. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 75(2), 276-287. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12008>
- Zarei, E., Dehghan, M., Askari, M., Naziri, G. (2018). The effectiveness of forgiveness therapy on divorce adaptation of divorced women in Shiraz. *Quarterly Journal of Women and Society*, 8(32), 21-38.